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Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 2114

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - CHANGE REFERENCE TO READ 97277 VICE 94277

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, HO
SUBJECT: IMPACT OF NEW SECURITY ASSISTANCE LEGISLATION ON MAAGS AND SIMILAR ADVISORY MISSIONS OVERSEAS

REF: STATE 97277

1. I BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE ATTAINMENT OF U.S. OBJECTIVES IN HONDURAS. IT IS CLEAR THAT OUR RELATIONS WITH THE HONDURAN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT WILL CONTINUE TO BE VERY IMPORTANT BECAUSE OF THE CENTRAL ROLE THE MILITARY PLAYS IN DIRECTING THE GOVERNMENT AND ITS POLICIES. THIS WILL REMAIN TRUE EVEN IF THERE IS A RETURN TO CONSITITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT, BECAUSE OF THE DETERMINATION OF THE MILITARY LEADERS IP TO PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN DETERMINING THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF HONDURAN SOCIETY. THEREFORE, A REASONABLE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE DOES PROVIDE REAL ADDITIONAL LEVERAGE TO THE MISSION.

2. OUR MILITARY PRESENCE IS A "FOOT IN THE DOOR" FOR ANY FUTURE CONTINGENCY WHICH COULD DEVELOP. TO ELIMINATE THIS PRESENCE IS TO POSSIBLY LESSEN OUR FUTURE ABILITY TO REENTER THE HONDURAN POLITICAL/MILITARY SCENE.

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3. HONDURAS, ALONG WITH ITS OTHER CENTRAL AMERICAN NEIGH-

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BORS, HAS A RELATIVELY STRONG PERCEPTION OF THE CUBAN THREAT. HONDURANS LEADERS REGARD THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE COUNTRY AS A COMFORTING ASSURANCE OF U.S. INTEREST AND CONCERN VIS-A-VIS THIS POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT. ELIMINATION OF THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE WOULD SIGNAL TO THE GOH AND MANY HONDURANS A REDUCED USG INTEREST IN THE QUESTION.

4. THE POSSIBLE ELIMINATION OF THE MILGP IN HONDURAS WOULD PROBABLY CAUSE MANY MEMBERS OF THE HONDURAN MILITARY TO REACT NEGATIVELY. MANY HONDURAN OFFICERS STILL HARBOR LATENT RESENTMENT ABOUT WHAT THEY PERCEIVE AS A U.S. FAILURE TO COME TO HONDURAS'S AID IN THE 1969 WAR WITH EL SALVADOR. THIS LATENT ATTITUDE COULD BECOME ACTIVE IF THE MILGP IS ELIMINATED, WITH CONSEQUENT DAMAGE TO U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT AND, BY EXTENSION, TO RELATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT.

5. THERE IS A PROPOSAL TO ELIMINATE THE DAO OFFICE IN HONDURAS BY SEPTEMBER, 1977. THE ELIMINATION OF BOTH MILGP AND DAO OFFICES WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY DEPRIVE THE MISSION OF A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF ITS AVILILITY TO INFLUENCE FAVORABLY BILATERAL RELATIONS. IN ADDITION, THE "EVENHANDEDNESS" POLICY MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE REMAINING MILITARY PRESENCE IN EL SALVADOR IN AFFORDING EQUAL TREWUOANT TO BOTH COUNTRIES.

6. A FURTHER PROBLEM IS THAT THE MILITARY ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOH AND THE USG STATES THAT A PRIOR ONE-YEAR NOTIFICATION IS REQUIRED FOR TERMINATION OF THE AGREEMENT. THE AGREEMENT ENTERED INTO FORCE ON MAY 20, 1954 (TIAS 2975). IT IS CLEAR THAT THE POSSIBLE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL OBLIGATIONS OF THE U.S. SHOULD BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED IN ANY DECISION REGARDING THE MILGP.

7. IN SUMMARY, I FEEL THAT THE USG MILITARY PRESENCE IN HONDURAS IS IMPORTANT TO THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS MISSION. THERE COULD BE SOME REDUCTION OF PERSONNEL WITHOUT HARM TO THE MILGP'S ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS. I AM CONVINCED, HOWEVER, THAT THE ELIMINATION OF THE MILGP (AND DAO) WOULD MATERIALLY
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LESSEN THE POSSIBILITY OF INFLUENCING THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT AND, BY EXTENSION, THE GOH. SUCH A SOURCE OF ACTION CAN BE EXPECTED TO LIMIT OUR ABILITY TO PROMOTE U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS IN A COUNTRY THAT IS PRESENTLY RULED BY THE MILITARY AND WHICH CAN BE EXPECTED TO MAINTAIN A PREDOMINANT INFLUENCE IN ANY FUTURE GOVERNMENT.
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